



County of Los Angeles
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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DAVID E. JANSSEN
Chief Administrative Officer

March 23, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

Board of Supervisors
GLORIA MOLINA
First District

YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
Third District

DON KNABE
Fourth District

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Fifth District

**PROPOSED TRANSFER OF LAKE LIFEGUARDS TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT OR
OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

On February 3, 2004, on motion by Supervisor Antonovich, the Board instructed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), the Fire Department (Fire), and the Office of Public Safety (OPS) to report back on the feasibility of transferring the Lake Lifeguards from Parks to either Fire or OPS. In addition to working with the affected Departments, we also met with the Los Angeles County Lake Lifeguard Association (Association), at their request, to discuss this issue. Overall, the affected departments and the CAO agree that the lake lifeguard function should remain in Parks due to various financial and operational impacts discussed below.

The Los Angeles County's lake lifeguard function is integral to the operations of Castaic Lake Recreational Area, Bonelli Regional Park, and Santa Fe Dam Regional Park. Aside from their daily lifeguarding duties, lake lifeguards patrol park grounds and boating activities, and respond to emergencies throughout the park. They are involved in public safety and recreational programs such as the Junior Lake Lifeguard program. The lake lifeguards also assist in the maintenance of their assigned locations and manage the swim beach chlorination systems.

In light of budgetary uncertainties, Parks has had to curtail overall operations at Castaic Lake pending further discussions with the State. Castaic Lake remains open, but staffing levels have been reduced. At present, two permanent lifeguard positions remain at Castaic Lake to liaison with OPS while OPS boat staff continues to patrol the water.

The Association believes the lake lifeguard function belongs with Fire's existing Lifeguard Division since it closely mirrors the services provided by the ocean lifeguards. The Association also believes that the merger would result in a higher level of training and service because Fire's current organizational structure, as a public protection agency, is more suitable to direct the County's lake lifeguard operations.

Financial Impact

Based on Parks' Proposed Budget for 2004-05, the estimated net County cost for overall lake lifeguard services is \$443,000 for 35.19 FTE lake lifeguard and supervisory positions as detailed in Attachment A. Total appropriation is estimated at \$1.717 million, partially offset by \$1.274 million in revenue primarily from Flood Control funds provided to support Bonelli Park and the reimbursement of staff time from third-party special events. Costs for services and supplies do not include the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of equipment, as this work is currently being performed by Park's staff separate from the lifeguards unit. The financial impact will far exceed the current cost in the event that Flood Control funds are not available in the coming years. The cost for Castaic Lake boating patrol and enforcement by four OPS officers is estimated at \$246,000. All three lake facilities are located within the Fire District and would be eligible for district funding without any impact to the general fund; however, Fire indicates they would have to redirect that funding from main mission fire protection services in order to support the lake lifeguard function.

Operational Impact

Transferring the lake lifeguards to either Fire or OPS will impact the operations of all affected departments and will result in additional costs to the County. Currently, there is a coordinated effort between lake lifeguards and the rest of the regional park staff in the daily operation of the facilities as well as special events. If transferred, it will be difficult for the County to effectively provide quality public service and to ensure that safety and support services are adequate during special events. The lack of coordination could ultimately result in the loss of revenue to the County. Also, the division of labor would have to be clearly defined so that each department is provided the resources to take on the "new" duties and responsibilities. For example, Parks will require additional support to hire replacement staff to perform patrol and routine maintenance services once handled by the lake lifeguards.

Furthermore, neither Fire nor OPS has the organizational structure in place to provide technical direction to the lifeguards and to oversee the additional personnel. Fire does not have a presence at any of the lake facilities and would need to add some level of

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management supervision which would result in additional cost. Boating patrol and enforcement by OPS is currently provided only at Castaic Lake. However, adequate full-time supervision is not available as the field sergeant currently assigned to Castaic is also responsible for the broad geographical area of San Fernando Valley and Antelope Valley.

The Lake Aquatics Manager is the first line supervisor and is responsible for the direct supervision of the lake lifeguards. Lifeguard, maintenance, recreation, and water safety operations at each lake facility are managed and supervised by a Regional Park Superintendent, as illustrated in Attachment B. Because of the significant number of recurrent lifeguard hours involved in the provision of services, lake lifeguard operations require coordinated management and adequate support services to recruit, train, and provide other personnel services in support of the function. Although ocean and lake lifeguard classifications both require graduation from high school or its equivalent, ocean lifeguards are also required to have a County of Los Angeles Fire Department Ocean Lifeguard Training Certificate.

Conclusion

In summary, the transfer of the lake lifeguard services from Parks to Fire, or OPS, could result in increased costs and inefficient operations. Neither Fire nor OPS can absorb the lake lifeguard function within their existing budgets. If the proposed transfer were to occur, Parks will require additional resources to hire replacement staff for other lake management functions currently being performed by the lake lifeguards, whereas Fire and OPS will require additional management and support staff to direct the lake lifeguard operation. Revenue generation at regional park facilities could be impacted if the transfer does not result in a seamless operation. Therefore, we do not recommend the transfer of lake lifeguard services from Parks to either Fire or OPS.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or your staff may contact Cynthia Duong at (213) 974-6806.

DEJ:DL
RG:CD:ljp

Attachments

c: Fire Department
Office of Public Safety
Parks and Recreation
transfer.bm

PARKS AND RECREATION
Lake Lifeguard Services

Bonelli		Castaic Lake		Sante Fe Dam	
1.00 Lake Aquatics Manager	\$74,000			2.00 Supervising Lake Lifeguard	\$123,000
1.00 Supervising Lake Lifeguard	61,000	1.00 Supervising Lake Lifeguard	\$61,000	3.00 Senior Lake Lifeguard	163,000
6.00 Senior Lake Lifeguard	327,000	1.00 Senior Lake Lifeguard	54,000	1.43 Senior Lake Lifeguard*	73,000
1.57 Senior Lake Lifeguard*	80,000	0.19 Senior Lake Lifeguard*	10,000	8.43 Lake Lifeguard*	335,000
8.57 Lake Lifeguard*	337,000				
18.14 Total FTE Positions		2.19 Total FTE Positions		14.86 Total FTE Positions	
Salaries and Employee Benefits	879,000	Salaries and Employee Benefits	125,000	Salaries and Employee Benefits	694,000
Services and Supplies	5,000	Services and Supplies	5,000	Services and Supplies	9,000
Total Appropriation	884,000	Total Appropriation	130,000	Total Appropriation	703,000
Revenue	1,260,000	Revenue	14,000	Revenue	0
Net County Cost	(\$376,000)	Net County Cost	\$116,000	Net County Cost	\$703,000

* Recurrent positions

OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY
Boat Patrol and Enforcement

Castaic Lake	
4.0 Park Police Officers	\$261,000
Services and Supplies	13,000
Total Appropriation	274,000
Revenue	28,000
Net County Cost	\$246,000

PARKS AND RECREATION
Regional Facilities Agency

Attachment B

